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ABSTRACT

This study examined undergraduate foreign language programs at five institutions that were diverse in size, type, and geographical location. At each site, interviews were conducted with four students, two faculty members, and one program administrator; two classes were observed; and related documents and program literature were collected. Using the constant comparative method, four clusters of 11 attributes of quality programs were identified: infrastructure (language laboratory, instructional technology); program participants (faculty, students); program culture (faculty, faculty-student, and student-student interaction); and teaching/learning experiences (curriculum, learning environment, extracurricular activities, study abroad opportunities). The final product of this study is a description of the characteristics of a quality foreign language learning experience and an analysis of how decisions made about the program structure and learning activities contribute to the students' personal, interpersonal, cultural, and cross-cultural development. (Contains 24 references.) (Author/SM)

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ASSESSING QUALITY IN UNDERGRADUATE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

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Introduction

"Quality... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is... What the hell is Quality? What is it?" (Pirsig, 1974, p. 184).

Foreign language study in the United States presents a curious contrast with that in the rest of the world. In the U.S., "a substantial portion of basic foreign language instruction takes place in higher education" (Lambert, 1994, p. 123), whereas foreign language teaching in other countries is considered the purview of elementary and secondary schools rather than universities (Lambert, 1994), according to data which indicate that "no more than 1% of the students at the university level in [France, Germany, and the Netherlands] study a foreign language" (Bergentoft, 1994, p. 25).

In an era of increasing accountability and attention to outcomes, it may come as a surprise that little empirical research has been conducted on undergraduate foreign language program quality. This is due in large part to the great diversity among colleges and universities (and, by extension, their undergraduate foreign language programs), which makes the development of a comprehensive definition of foreign language program quality a daunting task indeed. In addition, research has focused on accreditation reviews and pedagogical standards rather than on the overarching question of program quality. To fill this gap, the present study examined the attributes of quality identified at

five institutions with a view to formulating a preliminary understanding of quality in undergraduate foreign language programs.

Literature

The literature on program quality on a larger scale has concentrated on graduate programs at top-tier institutions, with an overwhelming focus on educational inputs rather than student outcomes or the program attributes themselves (Haworth & Conrad, 1997). In addition, several of the viewpoints have relied upon reputational rankings (Conrad & Blackburn, 1980; Conrad & Wilson, 1994; Graham & Morse, 1988), indicators of quality or performance (Borden & Bottrill, 1994; Conrad & Blackburn, 1980; Cook & Frank, 1996; Gaither, Nedwek, & Neal, 1994; Solmon, 1981; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994), or limited ranges of study (that is, graduate and/or top-tier programs only). Finally, much of the program quality literature has a decidedly quantitative slant (Conrad & Blackburn, 1980), often advancing easily quantifiable "quality attributes" such as resources available and faculty awards earned. This study sought to move beyond these limitations, allowing for other less "easily quantifiable" attributes to emerge, such as teacher-student interaction and program activities that may contribute to high-quality learning experiences.

After consulting the literature on undergraduate foreign language program quality, one must conclude that there is a relative paucity of empirical studies on the topic. Databanks, databases, web pages, journals, books, reader series, and

professional and popular periodicals returned results focused largely on pedagogy, language acquisition, program management, and accreditation. The bulk of the literature on undergraduate foreign language programs comes from two perspectives: one is a decidedly administrative viewpoint -- e.g., educational inputs and resources – while the other focuses on applied linguistics. Articles on individual foreign language programs tend to dwell on notable curricular features (Monaghan, 1992) or initiatives such as "Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum" (Lambert, 1999; Ryan, 1996; Straight, 1998; Watkins, 1990) rather than on global descriptions of program quality.

The current study found its theoretical framework in a recent, more unified approach to describing program quality, Haworth and Conrad's (1997) "engagement theory." These researchers defined a high quality program as one that "contributes to enriching learning experiences for students that positively affect their growth and development" (Haworth & Conrad, 1997, p. 15). Their theory, which is "the only formal theory of program quality in the literature" (Haworth & Conrad, 1997, p. 213), takes into account the contributions of all program stakeholders -- not just faculty, students, and program administrators, but also program alumni, institutional administrators, and employers of program graduates.

Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this study was to examine several foreign language programs at the university level to identify, in a preliminary way, those key indicators that contribute to high-quality student learning experiences that positively affect student growth and development.

Two major research questions informed the inquiry:

1. What are the characteristics of a high-quality foreign language program?
2. In what ways do the characteristics contribute favorably to student learning in foreign language programs?

For each research question several sub-questions were adapted -- as suggested by Haworth and Conrad (1997, p. 22) -- that allowed a more accurate targeting of quality characteristics and indicators:

- What actions do program administrators and students take to implement the characteristics of a high quality program?
- In what ways do these actions drive student learning experiences in the foreign language program?
- How do these learning experiences enhance student growth and development?

Methodology

Given the complexity of the topic as well as the range of possible definitions of program quality, the most appropriate direction for the study was a qualitative approach involving multiple sites. Because the literature on

undergraduate foreign language program quality is relatively sparse, it was critical to include several programs in the study in order to arrive at an initial description of a quality foreign language learning experience. A variety of research techniques were employed that tapped multiple sources of data (Conrad, 1989; Crowson, 1992; Wolcott, 1988) to compile descriptive data used in the research: interviews with program stakeholders (faculty, students, and program administrators), classroom observations, and analysis of documents at each institution visited.

Data Collection

In choosing sites and participants, purposeful sampling was utilized (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) to ensure "that a variety of types of subjects are included" (p. 65) by making conscious decisions about which subjects to include in (and exclude from) the study. Through purposeful sampling, the selection criteria were intentionally shaped so as to obtain a sample that was diverse in terms of institutional type, participant gender, race, student academic class (that is, third- and fourth-year foreign language majors and minors), and faculty rank.

The choice of sites was a critical decision for this study. To provide the broadest, most robust description (Schofield, 1990) of program quality, five foreign language programs (comprised of majors in two or more foreign languages) at four-year institutions of various sizes, characteristics, and geographic locations were selected. These programs were selected in light of five

purposeful sampling criteria: institutional size (as reflected by undergraduate enrollment – small, medium, and large, with enrollment cut-offs of 1,000-2,000; 2,001-10,000; and 10,000+); institutional type (public or private); the number of foreign languages offered at the selected institution; the number of full-time faculty in the foreign language department; and geographical distribution (institutions were located in the Plains states, the South, the Mideast, the Midwest, and the Great Lakes region). In total, the foreign language programs in the study were from three private (one small, one medium, and one large) and two public (one medium and one large) institutions.

At each site, oral interviews were conducted with two full-time professors (of varying ranks) and four students majoring or minoring in a foreign language, all of whom were diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, and academic class or faculty rank. Also included were one foreign language program administrator, department chair or section head with supervisory duties, but who also taught in the foreign language program. In total, five face-to-face interviews were conducted for the study per site, one each with two faculty members and one program administrator, plus two focus groups composed of two students each; in all, 15 faculty and 20 students were involved.

The interviews focused on various features of the program, such as its curricular structure, pedagogy, extracurricular activities, and off-campus experiences, as well as the impact of different program features on student

learning. Two interview formats were employed, with slightly different questions posed to students and faculty; the same set of questions was used at all five locations.

In addition to the interviews, there were tours of campus facilities (program offices, classrooms, libraries, computer labs, and language labs) and observations of two classes at each site, which served a dual purpose. First, class observations provided additional variety to the study, as classes in first-year French, German, Spanish, and Russian, second-year French, and third-year French and Spanish were observed. Second, this activity provided corroborating evidence of what had been expressed during the interviews as well as a richer description of each program's character. To support the interviews and observations, several types of institutional documents were collected; these documents included university catalogs, program/departmental literature and web pages, course syllabi, and materials used in classes and language labs, whenever these documents were available. These written artifacts allowed the researcher to balance the program "talk" with the "walk." Furthermore, these multiple sources of data provided for a diverse perspective and rich description of foreign language programs. Finally, the use of multiple methods (interviews, class observations, focus groups, document analysis) and multiple data sources (drawn from five different institutions) was key in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study.

Data Analysis

Both oral and written data were examined for recurrent patterns and compared the emergent categories with those in the literature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Wolcott, 1994). The attributes of a quality foreign language program were constructed and refined using the constant comparative approach. This method, pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and summarized by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), is defined as "a research design for multidata sources... [in which] the formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of the data collection" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 66).

A key step in the process of analysis was the coding of the data. After the transcription of all interviews at the five sites had been completed, the interviewees' remarks, class observation logs, and notes on institutional documents and teaching materials were coded into an Excel spreadsheet (resulting in 2,458 rows by eight columns) according to institution, speaker, actions taken by program participants, effects on learning experiences, and outcomes reported, suggested, or observed during the visit (the last three being the key descriptors that were directly related to the research questions). In the analysis, there were several separate "sweeps" through the data, sorting by different headings, regrouping clusters, discarding descriptors, and merging the smaller categories into larger groupings on the basis of frequency (that is, how often an action was mentioned) and breadth (that is, whether the action was mentioned only by

students, only by faculty, or by both students and faculty at a single institution). This iterative process led to the reduction of the original list of 59 potential attributes to the final figure of eleven that begin to define high-quality foreign language learning experiences that have positive effects on students' learning and development. This empirically-grounded preliminary understanding of a quality foreign language program provides a basis for future testing and verification.

Results

The study followed the format used by Haworth and Conrad (1997) in describing each attribute of program quality in three ways: the actions taken by faculty, program administrators, and students to put these attributes in play in the foreign language program; the learning experiences that occurred as a direct result of these actions; and the "value-added" outcomes -- that is, the impact on language skills, positive benefits, consequences, and observed gains -- that these actions had on students' language learning experiences. To further facilitate the analysis, like attributes were grouped together according to their conceptual relationship -- a "cluster" of related attributes of program quality. In the interest of space, however, this section offers a brief introduction to each cluster and a synthesis of the actions, learning experiences, and outcomes for each attribute; the reader can refer to Table 1 for a detailed analysis of all eleven attributes.

Cluster #1: Infrastructure

A program's infrastructure is perhaps its most tangible and easily quantifiable feature, while at the same time it proved to be the most diverse across the five institutions in the study. The initial cluster of program infrastructure is comprised of two different attributes, the language laboratory and instructional technology.

Attribute #1: Language Laboratory. Foreign language programs often have laboratories, computers and related software, library resources, and Internet access, as well as basic technology such as cassette players and overhead projectors. On the five site visits, the language laboratory was mentioned time and again as invaluable in helping students to improve their language skills, build cultural knowledge (using CD-ROMs, videos, and web pages), enjoy language learning more through added variety, and spend more time on task on language learning activities.

Attribute #2: Technology. Instructional technology, the second attribute in this cluster, was recognized as a way to enhance the foreign language learning experience. Students listened to dialogues on cassette tape, recorded their own voice and corrected their pronunciation, watched video clips, accessed web pages in the target language, used multimedia CD-ROMs, viewed (and, in some instances, learned how to use) presentation software such as Power Point, and established contact with fellow language learners and native speakers by e-mail

and teleconferencing. As a result, students refined the four language basic skills as well as the subskills of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. In addition, faculty and students also used technology as a tool for accessing cultural information. Finally, and perhaps surprisingly, students not only learned to use technology as a means to an end -- a presentation on some aspect of language or culture -- but also gained confidence in putting their language skills to good use. While there were significant differences in the facilities available among the programs in the study, technology provided students in all programs with materials and activities that brought them in closer contact with the target language and culture; in short, technology can serve as a "great equalizer" in foreign language education.

Cluster #2: Program Participants

The second cluster of attributes revolved around students, faculty, and administrators in foreign language programs. Within this cluster were two attributes of program quality related to its participants: faculty who were diverse in their knowledge and experience, skilled in their management of the classroom, and caring in their approach to students; and students who took a positive approach to the language and the classroom experience.

Attribute #3: Diverse and Caring Faculty. It was found that high-caliber programs assembled a faculty who -- taken as a composite -- shared three characteristics. First was the diversity of faculty in terms of their knowledge and

experience – credentials, knowledge of applied linguistics, rich variety of language backgrounds (a balance of native- and non-native speakers of the target language), and personal experiences living and working in the host culture. Second, high-quality faculty were skilled at motivating and engaging students in the classwork. Third, they needed to be caring communicators. Students benefited from a diverse and caring faculty by gaining exposure to a variety of dialects, accents, and faculty experiences, as well as a student-centered, supportive, and engaging classroom environment.

Attribute #4: Motivated and Involved Students. If the faculty are the heart and the backbone of a foreign language program, then the students are its very lifeblood. As such, a program's students comprise the fourth attribute of program quality. Interviewees observed that a high-quality foreign language student has two characteristics: a positive attitude in general toward language and culture and the motivation to tackle the work associated with language study. These students became more actively involved in their language learning in four ways: not only did many students feel empowered in the language, but they also gained an interest in and an appreciation for language learning, developed a sense of openness, and acquired cultural fluency.

Cluster #3: Program climate and culture

The third cluster of attributes of a high-caliber foreign language program involves the interaction among the program stakeholders: faculty-faculty, student-

student, and faculty-student. Each mode of interaction represents a separate attribute that, taken together, make significant contributions to creating and sustaining a program culture that values collegial and supportive relationships as members of a shared learning community.

Attribute #5: Collegial, Supportive Faculty Interaction. Quality faculty members are not only there for their students; they are there for each other as well. Interviewees underscored the importance of collegiality among the members of the foreign language program. Faculty and administrators sought to build a cadre of instructors who would share their discipline and themselves with one another, promoting learning among themselves: "We feed off of each other pedagogically... We all have different skills in the class, so we're able to fertilize... rejuvenate, and energize one another's classes in that way," in the words of one faculty member. As a result, everyone worked for the common good of the program with an ethos of open communication that fostered a positive, supportive work environment.

Attribute #6: Close, Supportive, and Inclusive Student-Faculty Interaction. Faculty-student interaction, both inside and outside the classroom setting, was identified as a sixth attribute of quality. Interviewees noted how more communicative methodologies encouraged teachers and students to interact in realistic, creative, and even humorous ways in class. However, faculty members also interacted with students during office hours and casual meetings outside of

class. The frequent and collegial interaction that students and faculty had with each other also enriched students' learning experiences by providing them with more exposure to, insight into, and practice with the foreign language and culture, albeit on a more informal basis. As a result, students reported that they received more immediate and appropriate attention, tended to use the target language more often, and developed close relationships with foreign language faculty members.

Attribute #7: Collaborative, Supportive Student-Student Interaction. The third mode of interaction that occurs naturally in a foreign language classroom is among students. While there is certainly some degree of classroom interaction among students in most (if not all) disciplines, what may be a distinguishing feature in foreign language classes -- particularly at the lower levels -- is the degree to which this interaction occurs. Study participants recognized meaningful student-student interaction as a feature of their classes thanks to collaborative learning activities that were built into lesson plans at all levels. These activities encouraged students to use the target language with each other in class, and many students assumed the role of peer teacher both in- and outside the classroom. Interviewees mentioned three major outcomes of supportive student-student interaction: different perspectives, enhanced language skills, and a higher level of motivation and camaraderie among students.

Cluster #4: Teaching and learning experiences

Study participants spoke at length and often with enthusiasm about their teaching and learning experiences: a significant portion of every interview revolved around the various ways in which faculty and students approached the target language, whether in the classroom, outside of the classroom but still on campus, or in a country where the target language is spoken. Four attributes of program quality were identified that were associated with teaching and learning activities: a balanced and lively curriculum, an active and varied learning environment, engaging extracurricular activities, and an opportunity to study abroad.

Attribute #8: A balanced, lively, and pragmatic curriculum. The foreign language curricula discussed by interviewees were exceptionally rich in the breadth of course offerings and approach to the teaching of both language skills and cultural knowledge. Program leaders developed a course of study that was comprehensive yet practical, remained responsive to student needs, used external standards (such as ACTFL language proficiency scales) as curricular guidelines, stressed communicative competence, and gave cultural knowledge, appreciation, and understanding a prominent place in the curriculum. Students encountered a wide range of classes within a lively curricular framework that developed language skills and deepened cultural appreciation in a variety of engaging, meaningful ways. As a result, they reported gains in different arenas of language

competency -- communicative, grammatical, and cultural -- as well as the development of critical thinking skills.

Attribute #9: An active and varied learning environment. This ninth attribute of a high-caliber foreign language program has two facets: an active and interactive classroom and a variety of language learning activities. Foreign language faculty took four related actions to bring students in close contact with the target language and culture: they opted for teaching approaches that fostered meaningful communication, used the target language frequently -- even exclusively -- in class, considered variety and pace when designing lesson plans, and paid attention to special student needs. Students, in turn, spoke of three types of learning experiences associated with an active and lively classroom environment: involvement in meaningful communicative activities, a variety of activities, and attention to the affective side of language learning. As a result, their language skills often improved, further fueling their interest in and motivation to learn a different language.

Attribute #10: Engaging extracurricular activities. Despite the numerous extracurricular opportunities for students to have contact with the target language, the harsh reality was that many students could not take part in these activities, due in large measure to heavy academic, work, and personal schedules. That said, interviewees in all programs mentioned extracurricular initiatives that provided students with opportunities for additional exposure to the language and the

culture. Interviewees mentioned two types of actions associated with extracurricular activities, each taken by a different stakeholder group: faculty provided organizational and moral support for club activities, while student involvement and administration were essential conditions for the ultimate success of clubs and activities. Students derived numerous benefits from participating in many of the extracurricular activities that they described, even though the two outcomes mentioned -- gains in linguistic and cultural proficiency and motivation to learn more about the target language and culture -- were viewed as having a lesser impact on language skills than those evident in other attributes. These outcomes resulted from the students' taking part in a wide variety of activities and events -- with language, cultural, and/or social objectives in mind -- whether these were organized by faculty, students, or campus organizations.

Attribute #11: Study abroad experience. The culminating activity, the centerpiece, the pièce de résistance -- the study abroad experience was described in glowing terms by every participant in this study. As one student so graphically observed, "The foreign exchange program, in which you live immersed in language and culture, is the steroids to learning a foreign language." The opportunity to spend time in the host culture, however brief, was cited as the single most important component of the foreign language program in terms of its impact on language skills and cultural knowledge. Interviewees discussed three broad characteristics of a high-caliber foreign study experience: smooth logistics,

development of language skills, and development of cultural knowledge. Program leaders, in conjunction with campus administrators in different offices, took several actions to ensure that these characteristics were present in the foreign language programs: they built study abroad into the foreign language curriculum (either by requiring or strongly encouraging a term in the target culture), considered program costs and financial aid, were flexible in accepting courses from the foreign institutions, and maintained quality control. Students, in turn, mentioned four types of learning experiences that were the result of actions taken by program leaders: they participated in pre-program orientation sessions, lived in environments that promoted language proficiency, studied in classroom settings that developed language skills, and took part in a variety of extracurricular activities, both planned and unplanned. As a result of their time abroad, students reported improved oral skills, greater understanding of and appreciation for the target culture, increased openness, confidence, and maturity, and more effective performance in upper-division classes upon their return to campus.

Discussion

The breadth, depth, and richness of data collected at the five institutions that were visited point to a number of conclusions. The following discussion highlights the primary findings, potential applications, and implications of this study.

First and foremost, stakeholders identified their programs' human resources as the most important element in a foreign language program. Students spoke at great length of diverse, caring, knowledgeable, and skilled faculty members who encouraged them to learn and use the target language at all stages of their study. Consequently, program leaders sought to hire and retain faculty with appropriate credentials, excellent language skills, and a strong commitment to teaching.

Similarly, faculty described high-quality students as those who were motivated to learn and involved in class activities and who took risks with the target language. While these programs could not hand-pick the students that would enroll in their classes, faculty were proactive in nurturing their students' positive attitudes toward language learning and developing effective study habits.

Another key to the human resources aspect was the interaction (sometimes referred to as "chemistry") among stakeholders. Close, supportive faculty-student interaction was viewed as crucial: professors were available and approachable, thereby encouraging students to use the target language more often and seek answers to their questions in a timely manner. Faculty created for themselves an open, supportive environment in which they worked for the common good of the program and learned from one another. Students, too, developed a collaborative and supportive classroom climate, due in large part to interactive learning activities that encouraged risk-taking, creativity, and peer teaching.

A second finding was that the classroom experience must be active, meaningful, safe, collaborative, and encouraging, independent of the methodology used. This is closely related to the previous point that supportive stakeholder interaction is critical to a high-quality learning experience. Without active and meaningful classroom experiences, students would not readily develop favorable attitudes toward language study or effective study habits. Likewise, a safe, collaborative, and encouraging classroom environment was the essential ingredient of positive interaction, both faculty-student and student-student. The interviewees described how the communicative approach fostered such a favorable classroom climate, although class visits and some interviewees suggested that a supportive classroom environment was not necessarily exclusive of any one teaching method.

Third, stakeholders were in agreement that the curriculum needed to balance language and culture. While language form and function provided the framework for grammar and vocabulary, cultural content was instrumental in breathing life into these linguistic elements. In addition, cultural skills and information were viewed as an integral part of the curriculum -- and often a feature of every class period -- rather than as an add-on or a superficial aside. Furthermore, "culture" was construed in its broadest sense, as students engaged in activities that featured both "big c" (art, music, literature, and history) and "small

c" aspects (customs associated with meeting and greeting, slang, dress, food, lifestyles, holidays, and popular culture, to name but a few).

A fourth conclusion was that the study abroad experience was recognized as the most important element in the entire foreign language learning experience. Without fail, every student who was interviewed spoke at length about the impact that the foreign study experience had on his/her fluency and cultural skills. Several students who had not yet spent time in the host culture eagerly anticipated their upcoming experience. However, any study abroad experience must feature a good curricular fit, smooth logistics, some kind of orientation session, and quality control. Likewise, a quality foreign experience featured a balance of classroom study, extracurricular activities, and living arrangements that placed students in immediate contact with the host culture.

In addition to enhanced language skills and cultural knowledge, students in a high-quality foreign language program reported gains -- sometimes significant -- in affective, behavioral, and cognitive domains: they developed openness to and appreciation for other cultures, confidence, maturity, critical thinking skills, and stronger skills in English. Many of these gains were attributed to the students' time abroad, although balanced, lively, and pragmatic curricula provided students with enriching classroom experiences on campus that led to enhanced linguistic proficiency (in both the target language and English) as well as cultural awareness. Students who had gone through several years of foreign

language study, and particularly those who had spent time in the host culture, spoke of greater confidence in self-expression. In addition, faculty noticed that these students became more mature, thought more critically, and developed broader perspectives as they developed a second lens through which to view the world.

The final two conclusions are related to the eleven attributes that were identified in this study, which are grouped into four clusters (infrastructure, program participants, program climate and culture, and teaching and learning experiences). First, it can be conclude that a foreign language program can be of high quality without all eleven attributes present. That said, it is suggested that a high-quality foreign language program will likely have most of these attributes present to some degree. Although the data suggest that certain attributes carry more weight than others, no claims can be made for a minimum number of attributes that a program must have in order to be considered high quality. Likewise, some attributes should be considered to have degrees of existence: for example, a program could have several faculty with master's degrees rather than doctorates, but if these professors were talented teachers with excellent interpersonal skills, that program would nonetheless be strong in that attribute.

Having concluded that a program can be high quality without featuring all eleven attributes, the results of the study suggest that a foreign language program cannot be high quality if it does not have representation from each of the four

clusters. For example, a program without a language lab can compensate by having adequate access to instructional technology, but it cannot be considered a high quality program without the presence of at least one attribute from the infrastructure cluster. This held true in the two institutions that lacked their own language lab: faculty and students still had access to computer carts, the Internet, audio- and videocassettes, DVDs, and, in one case, shared lab facilities.

This study provides a practical definition of a high-quality undergraduate foreign language program in terms of its basic components (that is, the attributes). As such, it has several potential applications for programs. First, it is an appropriate tool for campus administrators and foreign language program leaders as they seek to develop, assess, and/or improve their foreign language programs in any or all of the four clusters and eleven attributes of quality that this study has identified. The attributes are based on the rich empirical data gathered at the five sites and are broadly supported in various literatures. Therefore, the findings are tangible (in other words, they are based on actual program practices and experiences reported by interviewees), theoretically sound, and, subject to further testing, potentially appropriate to institutions of various sizes and types.

Second, the study can serve as a template for creating new learning experiences that have the potential to enhance significantly student learning in the foreign language program.

Finally, the study provides concrete evidence based on empirical data of the impact of foreign language programs on student learning. Interviewees in all programs recounted how students not only honed their language skills and cultural knowledge in foreign language classes -- "given" outcomes of a foreign language program -- but they also described how their attitudes and behaviors were impacted by being exposed to another language and culture.

In addition to these applications, there are numerous implications associated with this study. First is the need for programs to survey faculty on the approaches, techniques, and materials they use and the amount of contact that they have with students so that faculty and administrators can begin to understand their program's culture and define its philosophy and practices. Programs will thereby be better equipped to hire faculty who not only have a good "mission fit" with these philosophies and practices, but who also add to the diversity of the professoriate in terms of knowledge, experiences, approaches, and teaching and interpersonal skills.

Second, program administrators should periodically re-examine the current curriculum and methodology for each language taught in order to support and involve student engagement in and outside the classroom. Every language curriculum should use ACTFL Language Proficiency Guidelines (or a comparable standard) as a tool for assessing its breadth, depth, and objectives. Similarly, the

curriculum should be inventoried to ensure the presence of strong cultural components across all levels.

A third implication is for campus leaders to take a closer look at the study abroad experience. For institutions that have no off-campus opportunities, this study is rich in evidence of and testimony for the indelible impact of this experience -- "Study abroad is one of the most powerful tools available for internationalizing the curriculum in American colleges and universities" (Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992, p. 1).

For institutions that already offer one or more study abroad opportunities, program leaders should conduct an assessment of the programs to determine whether they are accomplishing what they are intended to do. In other words, administrators need to address such questions as "Are students making sufficient gains in language proficiency?" and "How does the study abroad experience enrich the student's learning experience?"

A fourth implication that stems from this study is that campus leaders need to re-examine the program's infrastructure. In this study, two attributes, lab facilities and instructional technology, were identified that contributed to a high-quality foreign language program. While a language lab was absent in two of the five sites, all five had access to varying degrees of instructional technology.

A final implication is that faculty and students need to reconsider extracurricular activities associated with the foreign language program.

Specifically, program administrators should survey students about the effectiveness of the current slate of offerings, seek suggestions to expand (or reduce) the scope of activities, and provide adequate support for clubs, tables, movie days, and festivals. Some institutions may wish to investigate more ambitious initiatives, such as language theme houses or floors, conversation partners with native speakers on campus or in the community, field trips, service learning, and paid positions for students to manage clubs and special activities.

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APPENDICES

Table 1: Clusters and Attributes

Cluster #1: Infrastructure		
Attribute #1: Language Laboratory		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Faculty: • view the lab as critical. • make use of lab facilities.	Students: • receive practice in development of all language skills.	Students: • improve their language skills. • enhance their cultural knowledge. • attend classes with greater variety provided by labs. • spend more time on task.
Attribute #2: Instructional Technology		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Program leaders: • acquire technology and faculty create supporting materials. • incorporate technology into the curriculum.	Students: • are exposed to a variety of materials and activities used both inside and outside class.	Students: • improve their language skills. • enhance their cultural knowledge through closer contact. • learn new technology and use it to make in-class presentations.

Cluster #2: Program Participants		
Attribute #3: Diverse and Caring Faculty		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Program leaders hire faculty: • with appropriate credentials and experience. • with excellent language skills. • with international experience. • who are committed to teaching. • who can teach many levels and courses. • who are passionate about the language and culture. • who are skilled communicators.	Students: • are exposed to a variety of dialects and accents. • learn in a student-centered, supportive, and engaging classroom environment.	Students: • show gains in language and cultural skills, particularly in oral/aural skills and broad cultural knowledge. • are motivated to learn the language and culture.
Attribute #4: Motivated & Involved Students		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Faculty: • emphasize language study as communication and culture. • encourage risk-free use of the target language. • encourage good study habits.	Students: • take risks in a "safe" classroom environment. • are more involved in classroom activities. • maximize their contact with the target language, both inside and outside class.	Students: • build upon prior knowledge and support each other in class. • acquire an interest in and appreciation for foreign language study. • develop openness to other cultures. • develop cultural fluency.

Cluster #3: Program Culture & Climate		
Attribute #5: Collegial, Supportive Faculty Interaction		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Program leaders hire faculty: • with a good "mission fit." • who are willing to assume research and service responsibilities.	Faculty: • learn from colleagues in the program.	Faculty: • work for the common good of the program. • develop an open, supportive work environment.
Attribute #6: Close, Supportive, Inclusive Faculty-Student Interaction		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Faculty: • create an egalitarian learning environment. • are available to students outside of class. • are approachable.	Students: • have more frequent contact with faculty, both inside and outside class. • gain more exposure to and insight into the foreign language and culture.	Students: • get questions and problems addressed in a more timely manner. • use the target language more frequently and enjoy their learning experiences more. • develop life-long friendships with faculty.
Attribute #7: Collaborative, Supportive, Student-Student Interaction		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Faculty: • build collaborative learning activities into lesson plans.	Students: • are encouraged to use the target language with each other in class. • assume the role of peer teacher. • form study groups that foster collaboration and cooperation.	Students: • gain new perspectives on class materials from each other. • develop language skills and become comfortable with using the target language. • develop a higher degree of motivation and camaraderie with one another.

Cluster #4: Teaching & Learning Experiences		
Attribute #8: Balanced, Lively, and Pragmatic Curriculum		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Faculty: • develop a pragmatic, exciting curriculum. • offer flexibility and special considerations according to student needs and interests. • follow ACTFL/ILR Guidelines. • stress authentic use of language over accuracy while paying attention to both communicative and grammatical competence. • included significant cultural content in the curriculum.	Students: • practice all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in meaningful ways. • learn about the target culture in conjunction with the language.	Students: • are prepared for the next level of foreign language learning and use. • develop stronger communicative competence. • develop stronger grammatical competence. • achieve a higher level of cultural understanding (or competence). • gain a new perspective and develop critical thinking skills.
Attribute #9: An Active and Varied Learning Environment		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Faculty: • feature a natural/ communicative approach but use other methods as appropriate. • use the target language as much as possible in class. • consider pace & variety when developing lesson plans. • address varied student needs, interests, and learning styles.	Students: • use the target language in meaningful, communicative ways. • are involved in a wide variety of classroom activities. • learn in a "safe" classroom environment.	Students: • improve their language skills. • are more motivated to participate in classroom activities.

Attribute #10: Engaging Extracurricular Activities		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Faculty: • provide organizational and moral support for club activities. Students: • become involved in club leadership.	Students: • have closer contact with the target language. • have closer contact with the target culture. • participate in social activities offered by clubs.	Students: • have opportunities for more practice with language and culture. • are motivated to keep studying the language.
Attribute #11: Study Abroad Experience		
Actions	Learning experiences	Outcomes
Program leaders: • build study abroad into the foreign language curriculum, either as a requirement or a strong recommendation. • arrange for students to apply financial aid to study abroad programs. • arrange for students to apply credits earned abroad to majors, minors, and/or general education requirements. • maintain quality control through screening of student levels, advising, orientation, and close contact with the host programs & families.	Students: • participate in orientation sessions. • live in environments that promote language proficiency. • study in classroom settings that develop language proficiency. • take part in extracurricular opportunities, both planned and unplanned	Students: • improve their oral proficiency. • gain fluency in, awareness of, and appreciation for the target culture. • develop openness, confidence, and maturity. • perform more effectively in advanced courses upon their return to the home campus.

Protocol for faculty and administrators (audio taped)

Introductory question

- I'd like to start off by asking you to tell me what you tell prospective students about your [French, German, Spanish...] program. What are the program's distinguishing features?

Program goals

- In view of what you have told me, what are the goals of the programs? That is, by graduation, what do you hope that the students have accomplished by the time they graduate? Why do you think these goals are important?

Teaching and learning environment

- I'm keenly interested in teaching and learning. Therefore, I'd like to ask you a few questions about what happens in the classroom at [your institution]. Could you discuss which language teaching methods are most widely used? You could describe the methods in terms of delivery (e.g., lecture, lab, discussion, seminar) or teaching theories (e.g., grammar-translation, audiolingual, communicative). Do they differ by level (that is, beginners vs. upper-division literature or culture classes)? Why do you use these approaches? Which one(s) enhance the quality of student learning, that is, which one(s) lead to a greater command of the target language? What effects do the approaches have on student learning?
- What audiovisual materials (cassettes, CD-ROMs, videos, interactive computer programs) are used in class? How do these materials contribute to the students' language proficiency?
- I'm also very interested in the learning that goes on outside the classroom. Could you describe any activities, such as labs, tutorials, conversation partners, informal coffee hours, guest lectures, field trips, cultural fairs, or campus-wide events, that students are required or encouraged to participate in? How do these activities contribute to the students' understanding of the target language and culture?

- On a related note, are students required (or encouraged) to participate in an off-campus program, such as a term in another country?

  If so, how does this experience contribute to the student's language learning experience? How does this fit into your program curriculum?

  If not, how do students become more familiar with the target language and its culture without leaving the campus?
- How do you characterize the program in terms of stakeholder interaction, both in and outside the classroom? By that I mean, what kinds of interaction are there between students? Between students and faculty members? Between faculty members? How do these types of interaction contribute to the overall quality of the program?
- The program you have described thus far appears to be quite varied. In your estimation, which learning experiences contribute the most to the students' proficiency in the language and knowledge of the target culture?

Program quality and outcomes

- I'd like to talk some more about program quality. Let's start by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of your foreign language program. In your opinion, what do you think this program does exceptionally well? What aspects of the program could be earmarked for improvement?
- Imagine that you could redesign the entire foreign language program at [this institution]. What three or four features would you be likely to include in the reconfigured program to strengthen or enhance its quality?
- We've already talked about activities that are present in your program that contribute to language proficiency. Are there any activities that are absent from your program that you believe would strengthen its overall quality?
- How would you characterize a high-quality faculty member in a foreign language program? How about a high-quality student?

- Finally, I'd like your views on the impact of the program on the language major or minor as a person; that is, what "value" is "added" to the student by the end of the program in terms of their knowledge, attitudes, or behavior? In your opinion, what does the program do to "add" this value to students or to contribute to these learning outcomes?

Concluding questions

- Are there any features of your program that we have not addressed during this interview?
- Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?
- If I need further clarifications on any of the points we have talked about, may I contact you later?

Protocol for students (audio taped)

Introductory question

- I'd like to start off by asking you to tell me why you decided to major/minor in [French, German, Spanish...]. Why did you choose to study at [this institution]?
- When other people ask you about [this institution's] foreign language program, what one or two things do you tell them?

Program goals

- In view of what you have told me, what do you think are the goals of the programs? That is, what do you think that the faculty and administrators hope that you will have accomplished by the time you complete the program? Why do you think these goals are important?

Teaching and learning environment

- I'm keenly interested in teaching and learning. Therefore, I'd like to ask you a few questions about what happens in the classroom at [your institution]. Could you begin by telling me which classes you have taken and are currently taking in the program at [this institution]?
- Next, could you describe what happens in a typical classroom here? Could you discuss the approach to teaching and learning that is used in the program? You can discuss this in terms of what the professor does or what s/he asks the students to do in class to learn and use the target language. Do the activities differ by level (that is, beginners vs. upper-division literature or culture classes)? Which ones lead to a greater command of the target language? What audiovisual materials (cassettes, CD-ROMs, videos, interactive computer programs) are used in class? How do these materials contribute to your language proficiency?
- I'm also very interested in the learning that goes on outside the classroom. Could you describe any activities, such as labs, tutorials, conversation partners, informal coffee hours, guest lectures, field trips, cultural fairs, or campus-wide events, that students

are required or encouraged to participate in? If these activities are optional, which ones have you chosen to participate in? How do these activities contribute to your understanding of the target language and culture? Which optional ones have you chosen not to participate in, and why not?

- On a related note, are you required (or encouraged) to participate in an off-campus program, such as a term in another country?

  If so, how does/did this experience contribute to your language learning experience?

  If not, how do you become more familiar with the target language and its culture without leaving the campus?

- How do you characterize the program in terms of interaction, both in and outside the classroom between students? In your opinion, what impact have your classmates had on your language learning?
- How do you describe the types of interaction that you have with faculty in the foreign language program? In your opinion, what impact have your professors had on your language learning?
- The program you have described thus far appears to be quite varied. In your estimation, which learning experiences contribute the most to your proficiency in the language and knowledge of the target culture?

Program quality and outcomes

- I'd like to talk some more about program quality. Let's start by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the foreign language program here. In your opinion, what do you think this program does exceptionally well? What aspects of the program could be earmarked for improvement?
- Imagine that you could redesign the entire foreign language program at [this institution]. What three or four features would you be likely to include in the reconfigured program to strengthen or enhance its quality?

- We've already talked about activities that are present in your program that contribute to language proficiency. Are there any activities that are absent from your program that you believe would strengthen its overall quality?
- How would you characterize a high-quality faculty member in a foreign language program? How about a high-quality student?
- Finally, I'd like to ask you about the overall impact of the foreign language program on its students. I'm interested in learning how you feel that the [French, German, Spanish...] program has changed you, if at all, in terms of your knowledge, attitudes, or behavior. In your opinion, what specifically does the program do to "add" this value or contribute to your learning?

Concluding questions

- Are there any features of your program that we have not addressed during this interview?
- Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?
- If I need further clarifications on any of the points we have talked about, may I contact you later?

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